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Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum**

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* A/70/150.

** The information contained in the present addendum was received after the submission of the main report.

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III. Replies received from Governments

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

[Original: English]
[21 July 2015]

The idea of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was proposed for the very first time by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1974, which indicates its long-standing commitment to the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free world, including in particular through the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in this volatile region.

The consensual and constant adoption by the General Assembly, since 1980, of resolutions calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East signifies the particular importance of the realization of this noble idea for the international community. It also indicates that the establishment of such a zone enjoys long-standing strong global support.

Moreover, the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have highlighted the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East as a matter of priority in the successive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty. The adoption by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of a separate resolution on the Middle East, as an essential and integral part of the package for the indefinite extension of the Treaty, signifies the importance of the realization of this goal for the parties.

In addition, the 2000 Review Conference, while noting that all countries in the region of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, were parties to the Treaty, reaffirmed "the importance of Israel's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the placement of all of its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East" and paving the way for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

Moreover, in an important effort to pursue the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, the 2010 Review Conference renewed the resolve of the States parties to the Treaty to undertake, individually and collectively, all necessary measures aimed at prompting implementation of the resolution and, while recalling "the reaffirmation by the 2000 Review Conference of the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards", unanimously decided to convene a conference in 2012, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

This decision was supported overwhelmingly by the international community and significant efforts were exerted for the successful commencement of the conference in Helsinki in late 2012. Consistent with its long-standing commitment to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, the Islamic Republic of Iran, including through several rounds of consultations with the facilitator, expressed its views regarding the issues relating to the organization of the conference, and declared, well in advance, its readiness to participate therein.

However, unfortunately, the planned Helsinki conference was not convened owing solely to the opposition of the Israeli regime. The worst thing was that the proposal "to entrust the United Nations Secretary-General to convene the Conference no later than 1 March 2016", which had been made at the 2015 Review Conference and had met with the agreement of almost all the States parties, was rejected by the United States, which also led to the failure of the Review Conference. Immediately after the Review Conference, the Israeli Prime Minister thanked the United States officials for taking this position. This clearly indicates not only the hypocritical policies of the United States with regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, but also proves that that country is even prepared to disregard the views of almost all parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty solely to appease the Israeli regime, which is the only non-party to this treaty in the Middle East. This kind of recompense will no doubt further motivate the Israeli regime to continue to threaten its neighbours and the region and to defy the repeated calls by the international community to comply with international principles and norms.

Notwithstanding the global call for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, owing to the intransigent policy of the Israeli regime, including its refusal to become a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place all its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards, no progress has been achieved thus far towards the establishment of such a zone.

It is crystal clear that the aggressive and expansionist policies of the Israeli regime (recent examples of which are its attacks on Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, the Syrian Arab Republic and countries outside the region) and its large arsenal of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as its non-adherence to international law, are the sources of serious threats posed to regional and international peace and security. Indeed, this is the only obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

This view is shared by the overwhelming majority of Member States. It is worth mentioning in this regard that, at the Sixteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Tehran from 26 to 31 August 2012, the participants "expressed great concern over the acquisition of nuclear capability by Israel which poses a serious and continuing threat to the security of neighbouring and other States, and condemned Israel for continuing to develop and stockpile nuclear arsenals ... They were of the view that stability cannot be achieved in a region where massive imbalances in military capabilities are maintained particularly through the possession of nuclear weapons, which allow one party to threaten its neighbours, and the region".

Against this backdrop, to promote peace and security in the Middle East and to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone therein, the international community, in particular the depositories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which are also the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, as well as the European Union, should exert utmost pressure on the Israeli regime to compel it to accede, without any precondition or further delay, to all international legally binding instruments banning weapons of mass destruction, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as a non-nuclear-weapon party, and to place all its nuclear facilities and activities under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards.

For its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran, by ratifying all international treaties banning weapons of mass destruction, namely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and fully implementing their provisions, has demonstrated its strong resolve in support of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Such legal obligations are also enforced by strong supportive policies at the highest level. One example in this regard is the address by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, at the Sixteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, in which he stated:

> "International peace and security are among the critical issues of today's world and the elimination of catastrophic weapons of mass destruction is an urgent necessity and a universal demand ... The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the use of nuclear, chemical and similar weapons as a great and unforgivable sin. We proposed the idea of a 'Middle East free of nuclear weapons' and we are committed to it."

In addition, the Islamic Republic of Iran has spared no efforts in supporting meaningful steps aimed at making progress towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in appropriate international forums, including the 2015 Review Conference. The Islamic Republic of Iran will continue its strong support for the establishment of this zone by taking the necessary practical measures to that end.

Israel

[Original: English]
[9 September 2015]

Israel believes that a more secure and peaceful Middle East requires all regional States to engage in a process of direct and sustained dialogue to address the broad range of regional security challenges in the region. Such a dialogue, based on the widely accepted principle of consensus, can emanate only from within the region and address in an inclusive manner the threat perceptions of all regional parties in order to enhance and improve their security. Direct contact, combined with trust and confidence-building, is an essential basis for the creation of a new security paradigm in a region fraught with wars, conflicts, disintegration of national territories and human suffering.

Accordingly, Israel agreed in 2011 to enter into a long process of consultations with the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Security Policy of Finland, Jaakko Laajava, regarding the regional security challenges in the Middle East. Subsequently, Israel was the first country in the region to respond positively to Mr. Laajava's proposal to engage in multilateral consultations in Switzerland to advance a regional dialogue.

Between October 2013 and June 2014, five rounds of multilateral consultations were held in Switzerland between Israel and several of its Arab neighbours. The central purpose of the meetings was to seek regional consensus on all the essential

aspects of a conference to be held in Helsinki, including the agenda, the concluding document and the necessary modalities. Israel attended all these meetings and engaged in good faith and sincerity with the other participants.

Despite Israel's constructive attitude towards continued engagement and positive responses to formal invitations for the sixth round of consultations in Geneva, the meeting was postponed several times and has not been held, thus preventing any substantive progress.

Israel continues to believe that direct dialogue addressing the broad range of security challenges between the regional parties is fundamental for any meaningful consensual discussion on this matter. Israel, for its part, will continue to seek such a meaningful regional discussion that could lead to a more peaceful and secure Middle East free from wars, conflicts and all weapons of mass destruction.

IV. Reply received from the European Union

[Original: English]
[11 September 2015]

Since 1995, the European Union has been a staunch supporter of a process aimed at establishing a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction, and means of delivery, in the Middle East.

In 1995, the European Union and its member States, together with all the countries from the Middle East and North Africa, committed themselves in the Barcelona Declaration to the pursuit of "a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems".

Following the 2010 Review Conference, which emphasized the importance of a process leading to the full implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, the European Union organized two seminars and a capacity-building workshop in Brussels — in July 2011, November 2012 and June 2014, respectively — in order to create a conducive atmosphere and with the aim of supporting the process leading to the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Moreover, all States members of the European Union took part in an IAEA forum on a nuclear-weapon-free zone for the Middle East, held in Vienna in November 2011, where they discussed how the experience gained through the established nuclear-weapon-free zones could be relevant for the Middle East.

The European Union commends the efforts of the facilitator and his team and the co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution, as well as the States of the region, for their active engagement in the preparations for a conference, in line with the decisions of the 2010 Review Conference. The European Union notes with appreciation that several informal consultations have been held and that they were attended in a broadly positive and constructive spirit, but that the States of the region were unable to agree upon arrangements for a conference to be held before the 2015 Review Conference.

It is a matter of particular regret for the European Union that the 2015 Review Conference was not in a position to make further progress towards the early and much-needed implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. However, this does not change the position of the European Union on this issue. The European

Union considers the 1995 Resolution valid until its goals and objectives are achieved. The European Union and its member States are ready to provide, individually and collectively, support to facilitate the implementation of the 1995 Resolution, including follow-up events to its previous initiatives.

The European Union recalls the set of principles and guidelines for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone recommended by the Disarmament Commission in its report of 30 April 1999, in particular that "nuclear-weapon-free zones should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned" and that "the initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone should emanate exclusively from States within the region concerned and be pursued by all States of that region".

The European Union is of the view that, although the 2015 Review Conference was unable to agree upon an outcome document that would contain elements on how to advance the implementation of this goal, efforts to build confidence and to relaunch informal consultations among the States in the region should be promoted, with the aim of enabling the conference to be convened as soon as possible.

The European Union considers that dialogue, which in turn builds confidence among the States of the Middle East, is the only way to realize the objectives of the 1995 Resolution, and calls upon all States in the region to renew their efforts in that regard.